DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 331 773 SO 021 288

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TITLE Educational Planning and Crisis: Notes on Management, Schooling and Democracy.
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REPORT NO ED-90/CONF-401/COL-16; ED.90/CPA.401/DP.4/7
PUB DATE 89
NOTE 16p.; Presented at the UNESCO International Congress on Planning and Management of Educational Development (Mexico City, Mexico, March 26-30, 1990).
AVAILABLE FROM United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 7, Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Citizenship Education; Democracy; Developed Nations; *Developing Nations; Economic Development; Economic Factors; Educational Administration; *Educational Planning; Educational Policy; *Equal Education; Foreign Countries; Global Approach; *International Education; Politics of Education; Role of Education
IDENTIFIERS UNESCO

ABSTRACT

The role of educational planning is examined in light of the educational scene in developing countries and the economic crises of the 1980s. Divided into three sections the first section of the report deals with educational planning in the eighties, with some of its background; and with the major challenges that are faced by the educational systems of developing countries in the decade ahead. The second section addresses the political nature of educational planning, its scope and its relationships with policy-making and management. The third section discusses the challenge to promote a democratization of basic education in light of both the current economic crisis and the prospects for the nineties. An 80-item list of references is included. (Author/DB)

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MEXICO
26-30 MARCH 1990

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EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND CRISIS: NOTES ON MANAGEMENT, SCHOOLING AND DEMOCRACY

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1989

* Prepared for the International Congress on Planning and Management of Educational Development, sponsored by UNESCO, to be held in Mexico City, March 26-30, 1990.

Introduction

This short paper is based on two complementary perspectives. First, that well informed and participant citizens are the most invaluable human resource for the progress of democracy. Second, that the major task of elementary schooling is to forge citizens. Given this two perspectives, the educational scene in developing countries and the economic crisis of the eighties, one may ask how educational planning relates to this sort of human resource development.

Within the space limits of this short paper, a couple of relevant issues connected with that question have been selected. Their sketchy discussion is carried out as follows. The next section deals with educational planning in the eighties, with some of its background and with the major challenge that are faced by the educational systems of developing countries in the decade ahead. The third section addresses the political nature of educational planning, its scope and its relationships with policy-making and management. The fourth section discusses the challenge to promote a democratization of basic education in the light of the current economic crisis and of the prospects for the nineties.

Educational planning in the eighties and some background

Educational planning today is quite different than it was at the time of its birth in the sixties; the socio-economic and political context in which it is conceived and implemented also underwent significant changes. In the eighties, both developed and developing nations are facing much lower rates of economic growth. On the political scene, elected governments are much more widely spread around the world now than they were three decades ago. While one's view of a democratic regime may differ, and granted that elections alone are not a synonim for democracy,

few would disagree that democracy made substantial progresses during the last three decades.

Significant changes also occurred in the educational area during this period. In industrial market economies, the end of the baby boom reduced the demand for primary schooling some time ago but upper educational levels did have a marked increase in the period. In these economies, literacy and elementary education can be said to be a right assured to all; the same applies to East European non-market economies. In developing countries, enrollments at all levels of schooling typically experienced a remarkable expansion. In spite of this, primary education to all children is still a goal to be attained; and in many of these nations illiteracy rates resist attempts to reduce them.

For developing nations, the economic scenario of the eighties intensified the challenge of erradicating illiteracy and providing basic education to all children. Schooling became more available than it was in the past but resources were much more scarce. For the coming decade, resources are likely to be somewhat less scarce than in the eighties. But if the gap between the current supply of basic education and the number of children in schooling age is to be substantially reduced, at the eve of the XXX Century, these countries will have to develop more intense efforts toward this purpose as compared to three decades ago.

Approaches to educational planning also underwent changes over time. In the sixties, educational planning concentrated on estimating human resource requirements to economic growth and on projecting the social demand for schooling. The second half of the seventies turned the emphasis on quantitative approaches into qualitative concerns. It also replaced a presumed neutrality (or a-political) character of planning techniques by an indication of the political nature of the planning activity. In the eighties, the slowdown of economic growth associated with the impact of

neo-liberal economic policies in a few leading nations (like the U.S. and Great Britain) led to new approaches.

Current approaches often focus on efficiency in management and on increasing the quality of schooling; sometimes a concern with providing elementary education for all balances the emphasis on efficiency. This emphasis on efficiency suggest that educational planning would be a collection of apparently neutral techniques. It seems that, more often that not, this emphasis forgets the lessons of the seventies, which pointed out the essentially political nature of educational planning activities.

Educational planning, policy-making and management

Educational planning originally has been associated with global or economic planning. The design, implementation and evaluation of educational plans frequently took place in government offices that were specifically established for this purpose or, alternatively, in central planning bureaus. This pattern tended to prevail over time in many countries. But in the last few years there has been increasing discussion regarding the appropriate location or planning activities. It has been argued that educational planning is nothing but a branch of educational management or administration. As such, planning for the educational sector should be part and parcel of management.

The design of educational plans may be seen as "the process of preparing a set of decisions for future actions pertaining to education" (Anderson and Bowman 1968: 356). As it is argued, this process is typical of educational management. The implementation of plans involve rational choices among alternative operational means to attain the desired educational goals. In a following step, planning envolves an evaluation of the courses of action taken as well as of the results obtained. As it is argued, both sets of activities also pertain to the domain of educational management, as usually practiced. The

argument goes on to show that to separate out planning from administration yelds two kinds of inefficiencies. First, it represents a wastage or resources, since educational planning activities carried out by a specific office or bureau could well be developed by existing management agencies of the educational system. Second, the overlapping competencies of these agencies and those of the planning offices tend to reduce management efficiency. In short, educational planning could and should be absorbed by educational management.

These arguments would be essentially correct if planning did not involve policy-making and could be separated from it. Actually, it seems that in the eighties educational planning may be a part or the policy-making processes or it may belong to management, depending upon its scope. Let us look at the first alternative.

Educational planning may be perceived as an intensely political process. Under this approach, it involves two sets of political dynamics: the politics of education and the politics of planning. The politics of education has to do with issues like the role of schooling in the allocation of social statuses and privileges, the distribuition of public resources, and many others more. Educational policy performs an important role in defining who gets how much and what kind of education, although the structure and dynamics of society also play an important role in that regard. The politics of planning, in its turn, has to do with the exercise of authority. It has the potential to to maintain the status quo and to legitimate the existing political power. This occurs when the existing political power does not seek its legitimacy in the pursuit of widely accepted goals in society - like equity, independence and growth - but in the adherence to procedures that are claimed to be "rational", intelligible and transparent (Weiler, 1983). Space limitations do not allow futher probing into these questions, but the preceeding should have indicated the essentially political nature of the planning process.[1]

The kind of educational planning described has been adopted in a large number of countries and corresponds to the one we became used to. It is, so to say, typical educational planning. It involves designing, implementating and evaluating medium or long-range global plans for the sector. It requires, among other things, a definition of the major educational policies that will consist in the basic framework for the plan. This means defining the main courses of action to be taken by the State in regard to the educational system, in itself and as it relates to society. These courses of action, it should be stressed, can not be fully defined ex ante. This definition depends upon the examination of the alternatives that will come up during the design of the plan as well as upon the political processes of mediating conflicting demands from different social strata and groups.

To sum up, typical educational planning is part and parcel of the policy-making for the sector. It certainly cannot be reduced to educational management, which usually has to do with implementing policy decisions made elsewhere. Therefore, typical educational planning may not be identified with educational management.

However, it seems that the economic circumstances of the eighties may be changing the scope of educational planning in a number of countries. This change in scope, whenever it occurs, dissolves the differences that separate planning from management. This lead us to the second alternative mentioned above.

It is known that the slowdown of economic growth in industrialized markets economies affected the rate of growth in low and middle income countries. Many of these are additionally affected by the resource drain resulting from heavy foreign debts, as well as by pressures from international banking agencies (like the FMI) to reduce government spending.

Brazil is a case in point. As far as the economy is

concerned, public debt is still high in spite of substantial cuts in government spending; recent government activities have been concentrated on short run measures that attempt to keep a 40% monthly inflation from climbing even higher (Tinoco, 1989). Medium and long-range planning for the economy as a whole, and for the various sectors of public activity, including education, have been virtually abandoned. Relatively lower levels of revenues due to the slower pace of the economic activity, as well as to the drain in national resources, caused by the service of the foreign debt, resulted in budget cuts. And relatively smaller budgets mean two things: targets for the existing projects are curtailed or, at best, maintained, and new projects are not implemented. During the last few years in Brazil, medium or long range planning have been replaced by short term policies.

This experience probably is not unique among other developing countries. It is likely that, in many of them, medium and long-range planning has been replaced, in varying degrees, by short term policies. This replacement entails an interruption of planning activities or a kind of educational planning which hardly resembles the one that has been discussed. Whenever the second alternative predominates, educational planning tends to lose its distinctive character: it ceases to be associated with policy-making. It tends to be restricted to the design, implementation and evaluation of a few specific programs or projects, within the framework of short term policies, which are defined elsewhere, or simply with the management of existing projects. Under these circumstances, the clear cut separation between planning and management no longer exists and the former tends to be indentified with the latter.

The argument in favor of the absorption of planning by management probably derives from this new reality, experienced by a number of countries. The argument, therefore, is not generally applicable; it will find support in a number of cases but not in others. The temporary identification of these two activities, however, should not mask the profound differences that exists

between management and typical educational planning.

When a temporary identification of these two activities occurs, basic decisions on educational policies and strategies tend to fall out of the realm of educational planning. The survival and the revitalization of typical educational planning, deeply involved with policy-making, depends largely upon the magnitude of the educational effort that is carried out by a country. Decisive policies aimed at extension of basic education to all children in scholing age are an illustration of such efforts.

Economic crisis and democratization of basic education

The reduction in economic growth rates in the eighties, in addition to affecting the scope of planning, intensified the educational challenge faced developing countries. The answer to this challenge, however, does not lie in greater management efficiency or in increasing the quality of schooling at the expense of the democratization of basic education, as it sometimes suggested. The issue at stake is not a matter of technical choices among alternative means to achieve given ends; it is essentially political. And in spite of the current economic crisis, in the years ahead there is room to adopt strategies that preserve efficiency and, at the same time, pursue the goal of extending elementary schooling for those who have been systematically excluded from the educational system, namely the poor.

Efficiency in planning and management is not an objective to be pursued only when resources are relatively more scarce. Efficiency falls in that category of objectives that are permanent, granted that efforts to attain it should be intensified when budgets are relatively smaller. Needless to say, improvements in quality of schooling fits in the same category of objectives, particularly in developing countries.

where educational standards often can be significantly upgraded in order to attain satisfactory levels. But neither management efficiency nor increases in quality standards are substitute for the democratization of basic education.

The major role performed by basic schooling is forge citizens. The fostering of cognitive skills and the socialization process that take place in primary schooling are important in the sense that they develop abilities required for the active participation in all realms of social life. This is not to say that basic schooling alone is responsible for the development of the necessary and sufficient conditions for citizenship. But its contribution toward this effect cannot be underestimated in modern societies. Actually, there is no other institution that is able to perform its role in developing the necessary conditions for citizenship.

Citizenship, by definition, is a right of every member of a nation. Effective citizenship exists when it is extended to all. It goes without saying that citizenship is the cornerstone of democracy. And democratic societies cannot be built by means of processes that provide the necessary conditions for citizenship to a fraction of its population and simultaneously deny these very conditions to other fractions. If building a democratic society is a goal to be pursued, educational strategies that exclude a portion of the population from access to elementary schooling are self-defeating. Therefore the quest for democracy, that may be viewed as an universal value, requires the extension of primary education to all children in schooling age as well as to those that were not able to attend it at the proper age. The magnitude of the task to achieve this aim demands a strong political will and day by day but determined efforts for long periods of time, sometimes during a few decades.

Growth prospects for developing countries in the nineties are not as encouraging as they were in the sixties. But projections suggest that developing countries will probably grow

at higher rates than those observed in the first half of the eighties, although lower than in the sixties.

The average annual economic growth of middle income oil importers countries[2] was between 1.6% (manufacture exporters) and 1.9% (other) in the 1980-85 period. Conservative projections for the 1985-1995 period suggest growth rates between 5.2% and 3.8%, respectively (under less conservative assumptions the corresponding rates are 6.3% and 4.3%). Regarding low income countries,[3] past rates for that same time period were between 5.8% (Asia) and 1.7% (Africa, South Africa excluded). Conservative projections for the 1985-1995 period indicate grownt rates to be 4.6% and 2.8%, respectively (under less conservative assumptions the corresponding rates are 5.3% and 3.2%).[4]

For both groups of middle income countries, even under conservative assumptions, economic growth rates for the coming decade are likely to be at least twice as high as they were in the first half of the eighties. Regarding low income Africa, the projected increases in growth rates are not as large but they are substantial. The Asian case is different, but the level of economic activity in the low income countries of the Continent was well above the average in the past and is not likely to change much in the nineties.

This means that educational expansion and improvement probably face somewhat better prospects in the coming years than in the first half of the eighties. In point of fact, both expansion and improvement in schooling can continue if societies are willing to increase rather than decrease the share public funds allocated to these activities (Carnoy, 1987). Available data suggest that the share of central government expenditures for defense, for instance, in both low and middle income (oil importers) countries, increased between 1972-1981 while expenditures in education decreased in the same period.[5] For the coming nineties, gradual but continuous expansion of basic schooling in developing countries, associated with progressive

improvement in the quality of the services offered to all children, depends essentially upon political options to be made by society. These options may determine, to a large extent, the revitalization of educational planning and the recovery of its original scope, wherever it has been replaced by a set of activities that are identified with management.

Notes

1. Discussions on the political character of educational planning are also found, for instance, in Hallack (1978), McGinn and Warwick (1981), Velloso (1978).

2. These include oil importer countries from: East Asia and Pacific, Middle East, North and Sub-Saharan Africa, South Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. Their Gross Domestic Product *per capita* varies between US$ 1.100 and US$ 2,200 (1980 dollars).

3. These comprise countries from Asia and Africa that are not oil exporters, and are not included in the group mentioned in footnote 2; their Gross Domestic Product *per capita* varies between US$ 240 and US$ 300 (1980 dollars).

4. Data are from World Bank (1984: table 3.1), *apud* Carnoy (1987:25).

5. Data for the shares of central government expenditures are as follows:

	% for Defense		% for Education	
	1972	1981	1972	1981
Low income countries.....	11.4	18.3	16.4	5.9
Middle income countries (oil importers).....	14.7	15.8	11.0	10.0

Source: World Bank (1984: table 26), *apud* Carnoy (*cit.*: 27).

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